

Words In The News

Teacher's pack

Lesson plan and student worksheets
with answers

Malaysian monks' ant
dilemma

14 March 2007

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Level: Intermediate and above

Topic: A Buddhist temple that has a problem with poisonous ants

Language: Vocabulary of a news report

Aims:

Reading skills	– Understanding a short news report
Language skills	– Practise using ‘used to doing’
Writing skills	– ‘For and against’ essay

Materials:

Worksheet 1	– Comprehension questions
Worksheet 2	– Vocabulary matching task
Worksheet 3	– Grammar– ‘used to doing’
News story	– Available online at:

http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/newsenglish/witn/2007/03/070314_ants.shtml

Preparation: Before the lesson, make enough copies of worksheet 2 so that there is one worksheet for every 4 – 5 students. Cut up the vocabulary and explanations, to make a matching exercise. Students also need one copy each of worksheets 1 and 3.

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LESSON STAGES

A Stimulate student interest in text

Generate interest about today's topic by showing them some pictures of Buddhist monks and/or temples (from the Internet). Ask the students to brainstorm ideas about the life of a monk and Buddhism. What can/can't monks do? Why do they meditate?

B Pre-teach essential vocabulary

Elicit/present key vocabulary that students need either to understand the key points in the text or to understand and/or answer any questions that you'll set them later in the lesson. The vocabulary is from Words in the News (so you can elicit the vocabulary by using the explanations provided online or below).

You could either pre-teach the vocabulary at this stage of the lesson or you could use the vocabulary building activity from further down in this lesson plan. Have students working together in small groups and ask them to try to match the vocabulary with the definitions.

Encourage them to work with the other groups to pool their knowledge. When they have done as much as they can, if they have dictionaries, ask them to look up the words to check their answers and to find out the definitions of any words they are not sure of. If they don't have dictionaries, check their answers and give them help.

Whichever method you use to elicit/present the vocabulary, you should then model it (say it clearly, highlighting the word stress) and get them to repeat the words after you.

monks

members of a male religious group that usually lives away from other people

temple compound

the land and buildings associated with a place of worship

cobra

a dangerous type of snake

meditating

sitting quietly in order to think deeply, usually for religious purposes

a colony of fire ants

a large group of ants which have a poisonous bite

painful swelling

an area of the body which increase in size, and hurts, because of an illness or injury

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the path to enlightenment

the way to reach the highest state of being in Buddhist and Hindu religions; when you feel at peace with the universe

turns up unbidden

arrives without a specific invitation

worshippers

people who actively follow a religion

well-being

the feeling of being healthy and happy

C Written record of vocabulary

Write the words on the board, eliciting spelling as you write. Elicit and show the word stress of each item and word class, if appropriate.

Give students some time to copy the board work into their notebooks.

Boardwork:

monks

temple compound

cobra

meditating

a colony of fire ants

painful swelling

the path to enlightenment

turns up unbidden

worshippers

well-being

D Set global questions

Tell the students they are going to read a text which is about a problem that a group of monks in Malaysia has.

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Put these questions on the board:

1. What is the problem with the ants?
2. What do the monks want?

Students read text the first time.

Give them a time limit (1 - 2 minutes) to read the text quickly to find the answer to the 2 questions. They do not need to understand the details for each topic.

E Check answers

Elicit students' answers to questions 1 and 2.

The answers are:

- 1 – The ants bite the worshippers who are meditating.
- 2 – They want someone to remove the ants from the temple compound

F Set comprehension questions

Hand out Worksheet 1 or use the online quiz. Students complete the worksheet to help them understand the text in more detail. Give them a time limit (5 - 6 minutes) to read the text a second time in more detail and to answer the questions.

G Check answers

Elicit True or False answers. Direct attention to a particular paragraph if an answer is wrong to try to elicit the correct answer (see worksheet 1 and answer key).

H Vocabulary consolidation/building

Students do the vocabulary matching exercise (worksheet 2 that you cut up before the lesson): in small groups they match each word with the right definition.

I Check answers

Elicit answers. If an answer is wrong, ask other students to try to elicit the correct answer.

J Grammar focus: become/get/be used to doing

Write this (adapted) sentence from the story on the board:

They became used to meditating alongside the snake.

Ask the students if the sentence refers to the past or present. It refers to the past.

Ask the students if they think the monks were happy to meditate next to the snake at first, or was it unusual? Did the monks continue to find it a problem?

The monks were not happy at first, but after a while it was not a problem.

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Draw students attention to the form of the structure 'to become used to doing something' and repeat the concept – At first something is unusual or difficult for someone, but after a time it is not a problem.

Write these two sentences on the board:

- A: They got used to meditating alongside the snake
- B: They were used to meditating alongside the snake

Ask the students which sentence means exactly the same as the first sentence – 'They became used to meditating alongside the snake.'

Sentence A has the exact same meaning, it includes the idea of a change in feeling. Sentence B only means that something is a not a problem or is not unusual. We do not know if it was a problem at first.

Ask the students how to put these three sentences into the future with 'will'. Show the students that we change the verbs become/get/be for the different tenses. We do not change 'used to doing'. Ask the students to find the example of this grammar in the text – what tense is used? The past perfect is used in this example.

Hand out Worksheet 3 which focuses on 'used to doing'. Tell students to complete the sentences using the correct form of 'used to' in a suitable tense.

K Check answers

If an answer is wrong, ask other students to try to elicit the correct answer (see worksheet 3 and answer key).

L Follow-up activity: Writing

Tell students they are going to write an opinion essay about an issue connected to animals. Write the following topics on the board (try eliciting them and others if possible)

Vegetarianism	Fur coats	Zoos/animals in captivity
Battery/industrial farming	Pets	Animal testing (medicine and/or cosmetics)

In pairs or small groups, students brainstorm a few ideas for each topic. What are the good things about or arguments for each thing? What are the bad things about or arguments against each thing?

After 10 minutes, take a few ideas for class feedback and then present a structure for a 'For and Against' essay as follows:

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- 1 Introduction to the issue or topic
- 2 Arguments for / benefits of / good things about the topic/activity
- 3 Arguments against / drawbacks of / bad things about the topic/activity
- 4 Conclusion – personal opinion/position in relation to the topic

Students choose one of the topics and write a short for and against essay - 120 words.

After writing, two students can swap essays, read and then discuss if they have same opinions. If there is time, students can swap essays and discuss several times. If possible, try to have students swap with someone who wrote about a different topic.

M Feedback

Give praise for content and show your interest in the different views expressed.

Give praise for correct language, and give feedback on incorrect language. You could write some example phrases or sentences on the board and elicit from students which ones are correct and which ones are wrong and why.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Are the following sentences true or false?

1.	For some time the monks meditated beside the snake.	T/F
2.	The monks removed the snake without killing it.	T/F
3.	The ants climb up people's legs when they are meditating.	T/F
4.	The Venerable Boon Keng cannot cope with the pain of the bites.	T/F
5.	The monks have tried to get rid of the ants.	T/F
6.	The monks will stop anyone who tries to kill the ants.	T/F

VOCABULARY

Match these words and phrases to their definitions.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1. monks | A. an area of the body which increases in size, and hurts, because of an illness or injury |
| 2. temple compound | B. arrives without a specific invitation |
| 3. cobra | C. members of a male religious group that usually lives away from other people |
| 4. meditating | D. a large group of ants which have a poisonous bite |
| 5. a colony of fire ants | E. a dangerous type of snake |
| 6. painful swelling | F. the feeling of being healthy and happy |
| 7. the path to enlightenment | G. people who actively follow a religion |
| 8. turns up unbidden | H. the land and buildings associated with a place of worship |
| 9. worshippers | I. sitting quietly in order to think deeply, usually for religious purposes |
| 10. well-being | J. the way to reach the highest state of being in Buddhist and Hindu religions; when you feel at peace with the universe |

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 3

GRAMMAR FOCUS – be/get/become used to doing

Complete the sentences by using the words in capitals with ‘used’

Example:

Can you help me? I BE / OPERATE this machine. How does it work?

- Can you help me? I m not used to operating this machine. How does it work?

1. Can I have a mild curry please? I BE / EAT hot spicy food.
2. Don’t worry. You SOON / GET / SPEAKING English when you live in England next year.
- 3 I’ve lived in England for 3 years, but I still GET / THE WEATHER. It’s different compared to the weather at home.
- 4 Since the 1960s, people BECOME / FLY abroad for a holiday, so they won’t give it up to save the environment.
- 5 I GET / LIVE on my own but it’s still not totally normal for me.
- 6 He left his job as a security guard because he GET / WORKING on the night shifts
- 7 Before I became a teacher, I BE / SPEAK to groups of people. Now it’s no problem at all.
- 8 I JUST / GET / CYCLING to work when the company moved miles away. Now I have to drive to work.

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STUDENT WORKSHEET 1

1. True – Paragraph 1 of the written text says, 'they'd become used to meditating alongside the snake but eventually decided to catch it...'
2. True – Paragraph 1 says, 'decided to catch it and take it away to a nearby forest.'
3. False – Paragraph 2 says, 'the ants are dropping down from the temple's sacred bodhi tree onto people meditating below.'
4. False – Paragraph 2 says 'The Venerable Boon Keng practices what he calls 'letting go' meditation - so he 'lets go' of the pain.'
5. True – Paragraph 3 says, 'An attempt to remove them using a vacuum cleaner failed.'
6. False – Paragraph 3 says, 'The monks will simply offer prayers for the ants' well-being.'

STUDENT WORKSHEET 2

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1. C | 2. H | 3. E | 4. I | 5. D |
| 6. A | 7. J | 8. B | 9. G | 10. F |

STUDENT WORKSHEET 3

1. Can I have a mild curry please? **I'm not used to eating** hot spicy food.
2. Don't worry. **You'll soon get used to speaking English** when you live in England next year.
- 3 I've lived in England for 3 years, but **I still haven't got used to the weather**.
- 4 Since the 1960s, **people have become used to flying** abroad for a holiday, so they won't give it up to save the environment.
- 5 **I'm getting used to living on my own** but it's still not totally normal for me.
- 6 He left his job as a security guard because he **couldn't get used to working / never got used to working** on the night shifts
- 7 Before I became a teacher, **I wasn't used to speaking to groups of people**.
- 8 **I'd just got used to cycling to work** when the company moved miles away.